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Improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee

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Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum*

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* This information was received after the submission of the main report.

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II. Replies received from States

Non-Aligned Movement

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[27 September 2004]

1. The Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) reaffirms the importance of the First Committee as a subsidiary body of the United Nations General Assembly that deals with questions of disarmament and related international security questions. In this regard, NAM reiterates that the role of the First Committee, as part of the multilateral disarmament machinery, is of great importance.

2. NAM is of the view that any change in the disarmament agenda and the disarmament machinery, including the First Committee, will have to be made in the context of the fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, taking into account that those were agreed by consensus at the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament in 1978. NAM is of the view that the improvement of the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee should be undertaken within the overall process of the revitalization of the General Assembly, in particular resolutions 58/126 of 19 December 2003 and 58/316 of 1 July 2004, and the reform of the United Nations as a whole, including the Security Council. In this regard, this process should not be detrimental to the right of all Member States to promote and defend their legitimate interests.

3. The issue of improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee has been an ongoing process since 1984. However, NAM believes that the main difficulties confronting the First Committee are not attributable primarily to the effectiveness or otherwise of its methods of work but, rather, to political considerations, particularly the lack of political will shown by some States to move forward with respect to matters of key importance for international peace and security, such as the issue of nuclear disarmament.

4. NAM considers it important that the duration of the work of the First Committee be maintained at five weeks as was the consensus a few years ago. Any further reduction of the duration would seriously diminish the importance, the relevance and the effectiveness of the Committee as the most representative multilateral body dealing with the issues of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

5. NAM emphasizes that disarmament and related international security issues should be considered in an integrated and comprehensive manner by the First Committee through the existing three stages, namely general debate, thematic/structured debate and consideration and action on draft resolutions.

6. NAM further emphasizes that it is the right of each State or groups of Member States to submit resolutions and to determine their most appropriate periodicity. In this regard, the biennialization or triennialization of resolutions of the First Committee may be considered, provided that it is voluntarily initiated and based upon a request by their sponsors. NAM supports the position that the consideration of issues in groups of items or clusters (10 clusters) as has been done for the past few years should be maintained. Similarly, a rearrangement of items under clusters

may be considered in order to facilitate a structured/thematic debate, without prejudging their substance.

7. NAM believes that measures such as the early election of the Bureau, convening more interactive debates, having more concise, focused and action oriented resolutions, and establishing an appropriate mechanism for following up on the implementation of resolutions and decisions would also improve the working methods of the First Committee.

8. Similarly, NAM is in favour of setting aside more time for holding informal consultations, in which all interested delegations may participate, on draft resolutions already submitted or yet to be submitted to the First Committee.

9. Finally, NAM is convinced that without the necessary political will to implement resolutions or decisions, any efforts to improve the methods of work of the First Committee will have no substantive impact on the efforts to achieve general and complete disarmament under effective international control, in particular nuclear disarmament.